

# COUNTY OF YORK

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** January 7, 2004 (BOS Mtg. 1/20/04)

**TO:** York County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** James O. McReynolds, County Administrator

**SUBJECT:** Application No. YVA-19-04, York County Board of Supervisors and York County Industrial Development Authority

### ISSUE

This application requests authorization under Section 24.1-327(b)(2) of the York County Zoning Ordinance to develop property located on the Yorktown Waterfront in accordance with conceptual plans for the Riverwalk Landing and Yorktown Riverwalk projects.

### DESCRIPTION

The proposed Riverwalk Landing project is situated on approximately 5 acres of land and includes eight (8) new buildings, plus the existing Freight Shed, comprising over 19,000 square feet of floor area that will be available for retail, restaurant, exhibit and support space (restrooms, storage, etc.). The commercial/retail space is arranged in 10 separate business units ranging in size from 396 square feet to 1,789 square feet. In addition to these units, the largest single space – approximately 9,950 square feet in a new waterfront building – is to be occupied by a restaurant that will serve as the anchor tenant for the entire development. The project's buildings are proposed to be arranged around and served by an extensive system of walkways and open-air plazas, landscaped open spaces, and spaces designed to accommodate outdoor performances and cultural events of various sizes. In addition, the project includes the construction of two (2) new piers extending into the York River – one intended to accommodate recreational vessels for short-term/transient dockage, and the other larger one intended to accommodate regional passenger cruise vessels, dinner cruise vessels, sight-seeing vessels, military vessels, and tall-ship replicas. Also, the plan includes construction of a 263-space, two-level parking terrace between Buckner Street and the Coleman Bridge as well as supplementary surface level parking under the Coleman Bridge.

This application also includes consideration of Phase II of the Yorktown Riverwalk (Phase I is already in place between Ballard and Read Streets). Phase II of this project will extend the walkway along the river in a westerly direction to a connection with the Victory Center at its main entrance. When complete the Riverwalk will provide a continuous 1.1-mile waterfront walkway connecting the National Park Service Visitor Center to the east and the Victory Center to the west.

Although conceptual and detailed plans for both of these projects have been completed for some time, this application for formal YVA approval has been held in abeyance

pending execution of all necessary easements and agreements. The last of these, an easement across Watermen's Museum property for the Riverwalk, was not executed and recorded until mid-December. With that easement in place, it is now appropriate to process this application.

## **CONSIDERATIONS/CONCLUSIONS**

1. Planning for improvement and revitalization of the Yorktown Waterfront dates back to the 1989 *Focus on Yorktown* Workshop and many of the concepts that were developed at that time have carried through to the final proposal now submitted for YVA approval. These early concepts – including a waterfront walkway, recreational and larger vessel docking space, retail shops, and public open spaces – were refined and detailed in the 1993 Yorktown Master Plan and then re-affirmed in the 1998 *Focus on Yorktown II* Workshop.

It was the 1998 workshop and subsequent discussions by the Board of Supervisors, Yorktown Trustees and National Park Service that led to the decision to save and restore the Freight Shed, but at a new location. Movement of this structure has now been accomplished and renovations are proceeding. Its location and elevation have set benchmarks for the detailed planning and design that has followed.

Another major event in the evolution of the waterfront planning effort was the County's acquisition of the former Mathews' estate property from the Jamestown-Yorktown Educational Trust. This, coupled with the execution of a new property management agreement with the Yorktown Trustees, provided the opportunity to plan for the development of all the property along the waterfront between the Coleman Bridge and Ballard Street as a consolidated assemblage. Thus, the coordination difficulties that would have been associated with a combination of public and private development plans for this waterfront area were overcome.

2. Although there have been a few unanticipated, yet advantageous, developments since the adoption of the Yorktown Master Plan in 1993, the course set by that plan for the waterfront area has remained a clear target. The following paragraphs provide several excerpts from the "Waterfront" section of the Yorktown Master Plan along with comments concerning completed or proposed implementation strategies:

- "Waterfront Commons

The focal point of the Waterfront revitalization effort will be the common lands owned by the Yorktown Trustees. ...., this Plan proposes the stabilization of the shoreline with a combination of rip-rap breakwaters and sand nourishment. Building from these improvements, and assuming that an alternate facility for the Post Office is located, a two-phase effort to re-configure and renovate the commons is proposed [to include the following]:"

- “Demolition or movement of the Post Office building and the Wharf and investigation of the feasibility of using the concrete and masonry demolition debris as part of the shoreline breakwater system:”

*Comment: The Post Office was relocated several years ago to the County-owned building at the corner of Main and Ballard Streets. The 1989 Focus on Yorktown Workshop and subsequent discussions among the Yorktown Trustees, National Park Service and Board of Supervisors resulted in the decision to save the Freight Shed building, to move it closer to Ballard Street, and to renovate it for public use. The building and the surrounding Commons have been transferred to County ownership as a result of the dissolution of the Yorktown Trustees in 2003. The Wharf has been demolished and shoreline stabilization has been installed (using some of the demolition debris as base for the more substantial armor stone).*

- “Reconstruction of a new wharf/pier complex which extends far enough into the river to allow deeper draft vessels to dock and which is long enough (approximately 200 feet) to allow two large vessels – such as tall ships, dinner cruise boats, or commercial cruise lines – to dock simultaneously;”

*Comment: The Riverwalk Landing plans include a proposed 395-foot long T-head pier located at the foot of Ballard Street. This pier is designed to accommodate tall-ships, regional passenger cruise vessels, dinner cruise vessels, and even Navy or Coast Guard vessels. The pier will be a low profile, floating design that will provide flexibility for meeting the docking needs of a variety of vessel types. In addition, the low-profile design will help preserve views of the river.*

- “Space/facilities for temporary docking of small pleasure boats – no marina services should be provided. Such spaces would be attractive to boaters wishing to make day-trips to Yorktown to visit restaurants, shops or historical attractions;”

*Comment: The transient boating pier is designed to accommodate approximately 30 vessels. It will not provide fueling or servicing of boats. Sewage pump-out facilities will be provided in accordance with Health Department regulations. No long-term dockage will be permitted. Public restrooms and showers for boaters will be provided in a new building just east of the Coleman Bridge.*

- “Construction of a new building on the Wharf structure designed to accommodate public restrooms, a light-refreshments stand, tourist information services/displays, and storage/support space for the Wharf and recreational beach;”

*Comment: These functions will be accommodated in multiple ways in the proposed development. Three sets of public restrooms will be constructed – one in the support building on the east side of the Freight Shed, one along the Riverwalk just east of the Coleman Bridge (primarily intended to support the recreational boating pier), and one set on the south side of Water Street on either side of the pedestrian entrance to the parking terrace. Tourist information services/displays will be integrated into the entire project and there will be several small commercial spaces that will be suitable for businesses providing light refreshments/food services. Storage and support space is integrated into the design of the support building on the east side of the Freight Shed and into the large building housing the restaurant.*

- “Construction of a public plaza in the area in front of the new structure including steps or a simple stage area which would accommodate public performances by community orchestra groups and which could accommodate a fountain or memorial as a focal point.”

*Comment: The Riverwalk Landing project design includes an extensive array of bricked pedestrian walkways and plazas as well as ample landscaped space. The large triangularly shaped area east of the Freight Shed and its support building is designed to accommodate a variety of outdoor events/functions and it includes a small, bricked stage for musical and other cultural performances. In combination with the large open space area on the opposite side of Water Street (between Buckner Ballard and the Chischiak Watch townhomes), the area could play host to larger performances, such as the annual Virginia Symphony concert.*

*It is interesting to note that parts of the public open space/green area (on both the north and south sides of Water Street between Ballard and Buckner) will serve also as the location for the extensive groundwater well network that will support the geothermal heating/cooling system for the entire Riverwalk Landing development. Not only is the geothermal system a cost effective HVAC solution, but it also eliminates the need for outdoor compressor systems at each building, thus improving the overall appearance of the project.*

- “Construction of an improved parking lot on the western edge of the plaza;”

*Comment: The County’s acquisition of the Mathews estate property from the Jamestown-Yorktown Educational Trust provided an opportunity to re-evaluate parking accommodations for the*

*waterfront. Prior to this, and as reflected in the Yorktown Master Plan, the premise had been that the parking demands associated with the public property development on the waterfront would need to be met with a combination of close in spaces (i.e., the “lot on the western edge of the plaza”) and remote lots to be served by the Yorktown trolley. Likewise, it was assumed that any development of the private property toward the bridge or on the south side of Water Street would need to accommodate at least part of its parking demand on-site. However, throughout all the planning discussions, there had also been a desire to minimize the amount of valuable and scenic waterfront property (both public and private) used for automobile parking and the Board of Supervisors was able to accomplish that through the consolidation of parking spaces into the two-level terrace now proposed on the south side of Water Street. (See Paragraph No. 4, below, for more information on the parking analysis)*

- “Demolition of the restrooms and lifeguard support building at the Ballard Street/Water Street intersection and movement of those functions to the new building on the Wharf.”

*Comment: As noted above, there are three sets of public restrooms proposed as part of the Riverwalk Landing project and the facilities at the foot of Ballard Street referenced in this strategy are proposed to be retained as well. While views of the waterfront and the new pier would be substantially improved if these buildings were eliminated, they do serve a much-needed function for the recreational beach extending eastward between Ballard and Comte de Grasse Streets. If these facilities were demolished, the closest public restrooms to the recreational beach would be those in the proposed support building east of the Freight Shed. During design discussions, it was determined that depending on these facilities to serve the beach would be impractical due to the distance and also would create an undesirable mixing of beachgoers and the patrons/visitors of the commercial/public areas.*

- “Construction of a boardwalk/observation deck extending out over the breakwater off-shore from the Ballard/Water Street intersection and a boardwalk connection to the new Wharf;”

*Comment: The transition from land to the floating pier will require construction of a fixed pier system extending over the breakwater at the foot of Ballard Street. This fixed pier will terminate with an enlarged end that will include a small roofed structure, which will provide a pleasant vantage point to view the river and the pier systems. The waterfront Riverwalk system will connect both piers.*

- “Conversion of the parking area between Ballard Street and Buckner Streets to an extended public plaza and inclusion of a circular drop-off area for automobiles and trams.”

*Comment: As noted above, this former parking area (which has already been demolished as part of the Freight Shed relocation and shoreline stabilization work) will provide an extensive and multi-functional public plaza. Adjacent to this area along Ballard Street will be a trolley/automobile pull-off.*

3. In addition to striving to meet the above-noted planning objectives, the Board of Supervisors spent considerable time analyzing the condition and potential of Nick's Seafood Pavilion, which was acquired as part of the Mathews' estate holdings and leased to the IDA for operation. Extensive studies of the physical condition of the structure and the costs of renovation, including elevating the structure to comply with state and federal flood hazard regulations, were conducted. These studies determined that renovation would not be cost-effective. As a result, it was decided that the building would be demolished, thus opening up opportunities for alternative uses of that property.
4. Consolidating the landholdings under the umbrella of County ownership, and the decision to demolish the existing restaurant, allowed the entire parking issue to be reconsidered. To provide a sound basis for decision-making, a parking consultant was engaged to analyze the total projected parking demand associated with existing and proposed uses. To complete its analysis, the consultant conducted an inventory of existing (as of Summer 2002) parking facilities (both public and private spaces within 800 feet walking distance of the waterfront) and the demand associated with those existing uses. This analysis concluded that the waterfront parking supply was adequate for the “design day” (defined as the amount needed to meet demand for 85% of the days of the year) but that it would become inadequate with the displacement of the spaces between Water Street and the river (where the new buildings are proposed). Based on a development scenario determined by the Board of Supervisors (a new waterfront restaurant plus approximately 19,000 square feet of retail, office and support space, some of it already existing [Pub, Waterstreet Landing, etc]), the consultant determined that total parking demand (based on the “design day”) would be approximately 480 spaces. Under the standard parking ratios required by the Zoning Ordinance in conventional commercial districts, this amount of commercial space would require approximately 180 spaces. The additional spaces calculated into the Walker projection are based on the demands associated with the public beach, the piers, and the public open spaces proposed in the Riverwalk Landing project. The proposed 263-space parking terrace, together with the surface level spaces available under the bridge, in other public and private lots along Water Street, and in the York Hall parking lot, will provide all but about 50 of these spaces. Those 50 spaces, which would be needed only on peak demand days, would be available in the more remote lots (Courthouse, Visitor Center, Victory Center, etc.) that are serviced during peak times by the Yorktown trolley. In addition, should demand ultimately outstrip supply, or in the event additional commercial or cultural space is added on adjacent

properties, the proposed parking terrace is designed to have footers that could accommodate the loads of a future third level.

5. The proposed buildings have been designed to complement the architecture (and the character of Yorktown) of the existing Freight Shed and the adjacent Chischiak Watch townhomes, and the character of Yorktown. Photographs of an architectural model depicting the proposed development are attached and the model itself is on display in the County Administrator's office. As can be seen from the photographs, the architectural details of the proposed structures reflect the shapes, configurations, materials, colors and other features typical of many of the structures along historic Main Street. The extensive use of brick will ensure that the structures are sustainable. Cement fiber, wood look-alike clapboard will be used to complement the brick facades proposed for many of the structures. Roof materials will be slate or composite materials designed to look like slate. Windows, doors, trims, lighting fixtures and other hardware/etc. will be traditional colonial styles. The walkways and plaza areas will be surfaced with brick pavers compatible with those used in the Phase I Riverwalk construction. Although they will not become effective until June 1, 2004, there is nothing in the proposed project design that would be inconsistent with the Yorktown Architectural Design Guidelines recently approved by the Board of Supervisors.
6. The YVA regulations indicate that the baseline maximum building height is 25 feet. The Board of Supervisors can authorize heights in excess of 25 feet after "*evaluation of the character of the surrounding area, the spatial relationships of existing developments, the specific architecture proposed and the potential impacts on any scenic views or vistas.*" Building heights proposed for Riverwalk Landing range from 22 feet to 29 feet (measured to the roof peak from the adjacent finished grade ground elevation; finished grade will be higher than the existing ground level by approximately 3 to 4 feet since the buildings must be elevated to meet flood hazard regulations). Two of the structures also include cupolas that will extend to 30 feet and 40 feet, but neither cupola will be positioned so as to negatively impact views from any of the adjoining Chischiak Watch properties. All of the buildings are single story, but several appear to have a second floor because of the presence of dormers.

The parking terrace will be constructed to take advantage of the natural bluffs on the south side of Water Street and the structure will be slightly recessed into the bluff. Access to the second level will be from Buckner Street, thus taking advantage of the natural rise in Buckner. There will be no internal ramp system. The terrace is designed as a low-profile structure and the height of the second level, including its perimeter parapet wall, will be approximately 16 feet, which will be lower than the top of the bluff along its southern side. The stairwell/maintenance area at the northwest corner of the structure will be approximately 29 feet high, but will still be much lower than the bridge that will serve as its backdrop. The design of the terrace will ensure that views upriver from the adjacent Chischiak Watch properties will not be impacted nor will views from the remaining County-owned property at the top of the bluffs on the south side of the terrace. As a further architectural enhancement, direct views of the parking terrace from Water Street will be buffered by landscaping

and the three commercial/support structures located between the street and the parking structure.

7. The YVA regulations require that at least 25% of the total area of any commercial development be reserved as landscaped open space or improved open-air pedestrian plazas or courts, unless the Board approves a smaller percentage. With a total area of approximately 4.8 acres, the Riverwalk Landing project will have over 50% of its area in landscaped open space or improved pedestrian walkways/plazas.
8. The Riverwalk is an integral part of the total waterfront improvement effort. A major segment of the Riverwalk was completed in 2000, and the proposed construction will ensure its completion westward to the Victory Center. The routing of the Riverwalk continues to be along the shoreline, which is also being restored, protected and nourished from the Coleman Bridge west to the bluffs beyond Yorktown Creek. Immediately west of the bridge, the Riverwalk will be constructed within an easement donated by the Watermen's Museum. Beyond the Museum property, the walkway will be located on property owned by the National Park Service and will be constructed under authority of a land use permit/agreement approved by the NPS. The design of the Riverwalk will be consistent with the first phase construction and will include brick pavers, granite edging, granite seatwalls, pedestrian lighting, and landscaping at various locations.
9. Because tenants for the proposed retail spaces have not yet been identified and finalized, the overall signage plan has not yet been developed for submission (as stipulated in the YVA regulations). In the absence of an overall signage plan at this stage of the development, staff recommends that a condition of approval be established to require signage to conform to the standards set out in the recently adopted Yorktown Design Guidelines. Those standards, establish limits on sign height, size, location and design that will ensure compatibility with the signage associated with other uses in Yorktown. In accordance with the Historic District standards, sign size limits would be as follows:

- Freestanding: Nine (9) square feet
- Hanging: Six (6) square feet
- Wall: Five (5) square feet

### **PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning Commission will be considering this application at its meeting on January 14, 2004 and the application has been advertised for the Board's agenda in anticipation of the Commission completing its deliberations and forwarding a recommendation on the 14<sup>th</sup>.



## **RECOMMENDATION**

I believe that the proposed Riverwalk Landing and Riverwalk projects, as described above and depicted on the conceptual plans attached to this memorandum, are consistent with the guidance provided by the adopted Yorktown Master Plan and also that they are compatible with the character of Yorktown. The proposed developments comply in all respects with the provisions of the YVA District and also with the Yorktown Architectural Design Guidelines, which become effective June 1, 2004. This project has been through an extensive planning process and has been the subject of much discussion and deliberation by the Board of Supervisors and citizens. I believe the final product is consistent with the visions first articulated in the 1989 *Focus on Yorktown* workshop and that the years of planning since then have shaped and refined those early concepts into a final product that is befitting of Yorktown's special character. Accordingly, and subject to a positive recommendation from the Planning Commission, I recommend that this application be approved through the adoption of proposed Resolution No. R04-11.

Carter/3337

### **Attachments**

- Overall Development Concept and Building Floor Area diagram, dated January 5, 2004
- Photographs of Architectural Model
- Proposed Resolution No. R04-11